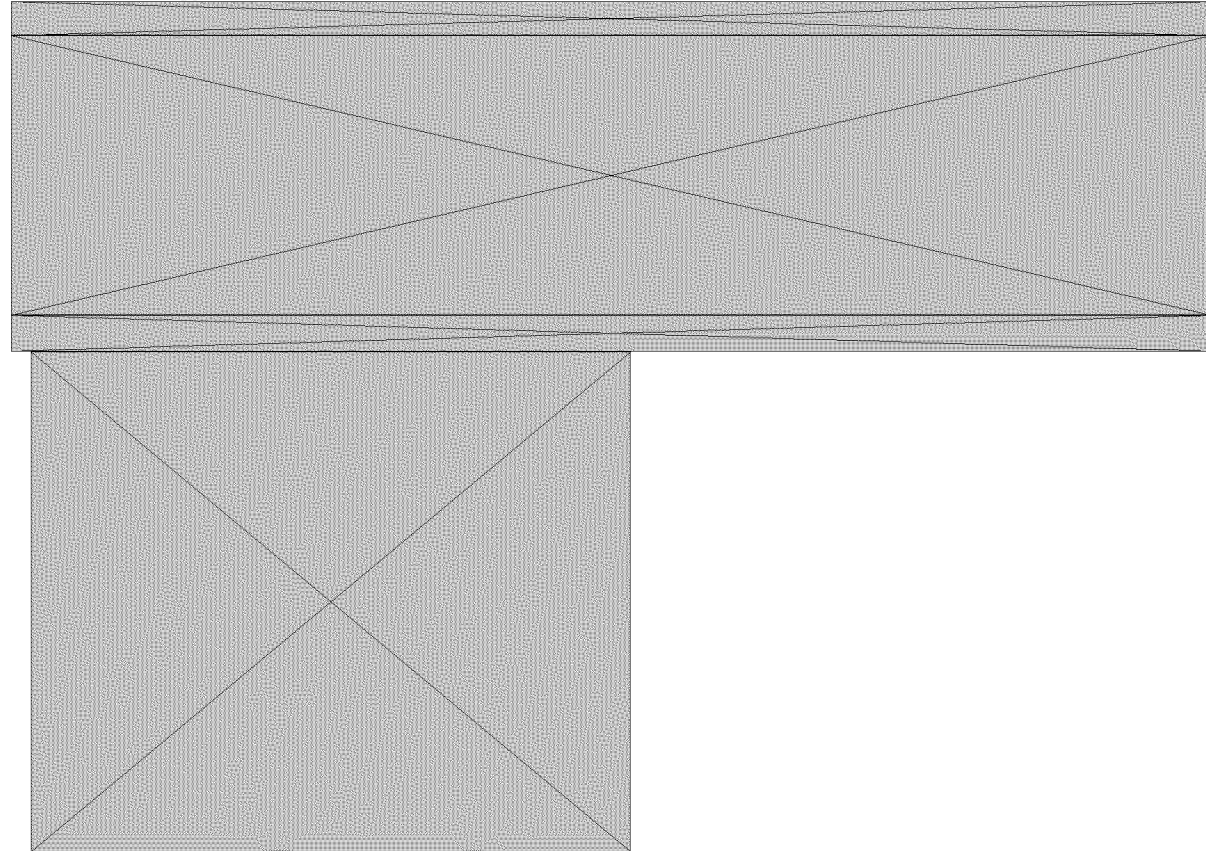


To: Grantham, Nancy[Grantham.Nancy@epa.gov]
From: EnergyGuardian
Sent: Tue 8/25/2015 5:13:30 PM
Subject: Solar, wind power draw Obama support at Vegas energy summit

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Energy and environment headlines for the morning of Tuesday, August 25, 2015



Solar, wind power draw Obama support at Vegas energy summit

By Ken Ritter

LAS VEGAS (AP) — President Barack Obama brought presidential star power to tout the benefits of solar electricity in Western states during an annual green power conference Monday in Las Vegas hosted by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid.

The president used a keynote speech to the eighth [National Clean Energy Summit](#) at the Mandalay Bay resort to endorse continuing development of wind and solar energy. Obama

called for overcoming resistance from "some fossil fuel interests who want to protect the oil-dominated status quo."

The U.S. uses 20 times as much solar today as when he became president in 2008, Obama said, while industrial and home solar installation has become less costly and more common.

"Every minute, another home or business in America goes solar," Obama said.

He urged the audience of more than 700 people to resist what he called massive lobbying interests pushing to roll back renewable-energy standards or prevent clean energy businesses from succeeding.

"We've got to be able to politely but firmly say, 'Sorry, but we're moving forward,' " the president said, drawing applause when he said the issue should not be a Republican-versus-Democrat debate.

Obama headlined an event that Reid has nurtured as Democratic leader of the Senate to seek support for new executive actions and other efforts aimed at making it easier for homeowners and businesses to invest in green energy improvements.

The debate about costs — to consumers installing home rooftop solar panels and to utilities that control the electric grid in sunny states like Nevada, Arizona, California, New Mexico and Utah — provided a point-counterpoint discussion between Charles Cicchetti of the Pacific Economics Group, speaking for consumers, and Lisa Wood of the Edison Foundation, representing utilities.

"It's a misconception that rooftop solar users don't need the grid," Wood said. She called it only fair that customers continue to pay to maintain the transmission system from which they draw electricity during peak-use times and at night.

The misconception, Cicchetti said, is that consumers are required to buy power from the utilities. The bigger danger to the companies, he said, would be for rooftop solar users to become so alienated that they find ways to store electricity collected during the day and withdraw from the grid altogether.

The question hits home in Nevada, where the dominant utility, publicly traded NV Energy, hit a preset statewide cap last week of 235 megawatts on the amount of rooftop solar power it will buy back from customers.

The utility will still accept applications for rooftop solar projects, company spokeswoman Jennifer Schuricht said. But it obtained the cap at the Legislature last spring to give state utility regulators time to revise net-metering rules to eliminate what NV Energy calls cost-shifting from customers with solar to other customers.

Similar fights have taken place in Arizona and New Mexico. Utilities are working to impose higher fees and roll back incentives set up to help the solar industry get established. They

argue the cost of transitioning to solar has declined, and it's time for solar customers to pay their share of fixed costs associated with maintaining the electrical grid.

Regulators rejected a bid by New Mexico's largest electric provider, Public Service Co. of New Mexico, to charge solar customers new fees, stop paying renewable energy credits, and eliminate a practice that lets solar customers get credited at retail rates for every kilowatt hour of solar electricity they sell back to the grid. The utility is expected to resubmit its rate request.

Arizona Public Service, the largest utility in that state, has been pushing state regulators to allow a monthly charge for solar, while the second largest, the non-regulated publicly owned Salt River Project, instituted charges on its own.

The solar industry is fighting the fees, saying the utilities are just trying to maintain their monopoly positions and profit margins. They complain utility policies threaten to kill their fledgling industry.

Obama drew applause when he called for leaving those he called "naysayers" behind.

"We have engaged in this debate many times before," he said, "... the debate is between those who say, 'No we can't,' and those who say, 'Yes we can.'"

"We refuse to surrender the hope of a clean-energy future to those who fear it and fight it."

Reid, who has made clean and green energy one of his touchstone issues, noted in opening remarks that the key challenge today is "properly valuing rooftop solar, properly valuing energy efficiency and properly valuing other distributed sources of clean energy."

One leader of a utility company said she welcomed the trend.

Almost one-third of the energy used by California utility giant Pacific Gas & Electric comes from what company President Geisha Williams called a renewable portfolio standard.

PG&E serves an area with about 16 million people in northern and central California, and Williams said it now has about 175,000 customers with home solar generation.

Williams said her company gets as many as 5,000 applications per month for rooftop solar, and it has streamlined approvals so they usually take about five days.

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Upcoming Events

New documents raise more questions about Colorado mine spill

By Matthew Brown, The Associated Press

Documents released by U.S. officials have revealed that the Environmental Protection Agency knew of the potential for a blowout of toxic wastewater from a Colorado mine more than a year before a government cleanup team accidentally triggered such a release earlier this month.

About 3 million gallons of water from the mine flowed into Colorado's Animas River and the San Juan River in New Mexico before reaching Lake Powell on the Utah-Arizona border. Public drinking water systems were temporarily shut down and farmers from the Navajo Nation stopped using river water for irrigation.

Here are some questions and answers about the newly released documents.

WHAT DID AGENCY OFFICIALS KNOW?

A June 2014 work order from the EPA for the cleanup of the inactive Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado, said a partial collapse of the mine's entrance had allowed water to build up inside the mine. The order said those conditions could result in a blow-out and "cause a release of large volumes of contaminated mine waters and sediment inside the mine, which contain concentrated heavy metals."

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Navajo farmers reject use of water after mine spill

By Felicia Fonseca

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — One of the largest communities of Navajo farmers along the San Juan River has voted to keep irrigation canals closed for at least a year following a spill of toxic sludge at a Colorado gold mine.

The unanimous vote by more than 100 farmers in Shiprock, New Mexico, was heart-wrenching and guarantees the loss of many crops, Shiprock Chapter President Duane "Chili" Yazzie said Monday.

But he said farmers don't want to risk contaminating the soil for future generations.

"Our position is better safe than sorry," Yazzie said.

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China, US talking "clean coal" as industry struggles

By Matthew Brown

BILLINGS, Montana (AP) — U.S. officials and the governors of coal-rich Western states are meeting with Chinese energy officials in a bid to advance so-called clean-coal technologies that have struggled to gain traction.

Tuesday's conference in Billings takes place near one of the largest coal reserves in the world — the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming.

It comes as the industry has suffered a beating in recent months: Mining companies going bankrupt. Proposals to hike coal royalties and lease payments. And cheap natural gas squeezing out demand for coal.

Those woes are in addition to concerns over coal's role in climate change.

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Supporters of Iran agreement feel momentum on Capitol Hill

By Erica Werner

WASHINGTON (AP) — Supporters of the Iran nuclear deal see growing momentum on their side in the Senate, raising the possibility they'll be able to block a disapproval resolution and protect President Barack Obama from having to use his veto pen.

Such an outcome — which looked all but inconceivable in the days after the deal was signed July 14, and remains a long-shot — would be a major victory for Obama, who is staking his foreign policy legacy largely on the agreement struck by the U.S., Iran, and five world powers to dismantle most of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for billions in sanctions relief.

It would take 41 Democratic senators to block the disapproval resolution scheduled for a vote next month; only 34 would be required to uphold an Obama veto of such a resolution.

As of now 28 Democratic senators publicly support the deal, with just two opposed. But supporters feel so confident that they can get to 34 that some have begun to say in private that 41 may even be in reach.

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Lab manager settles lobbying claims with \$4.8M payment

By Susan Montoya Bryan

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The managers of one of the nation's premier federal laboratories have agreed to pay nearly \$4.8 million to settle allegations of improperly using taxpayer funds to influence members of Congress and others to extend the lab's \$2.4 billion management contract.

Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico issued a statement Monday saying the lab's management agreed to settle with the U.S. Department of Justice to "put the matter behind us, take action on what we learned and focus on our important national security mission."

The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Inspector General released a report last fall that found the use of taxpayer funds by Sandia was a violation of federal codes and provisions in the contract itself.

The inspector general determined that the lab formed a team and worked with consultants beginning in 2009 to develop a plan for securing a contract extension without having to go through a competitive process.

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A message from the American Petroleum Institute

America is now the world's #1 natural gas producer and will soon be #1 in oil. Now more than ever, abundant energy means abundant prosperity, opportunity and security for all Americans.

[Learn more at EnergyTomorrow.org](http://EnergyTomorrow.org)

Sewage spill prompts closure of famed Hawaii beach

By Caleb Jones

HONOLULU (AP) — Most of the famed beach fronting Waikiki was closed after heavy rains triggered a half-million gallon sewage spill near Hawaii's world-famous tourist district, officials said.

The beach area was closed Monday after storm water flowed into the city's sewage system as a weather system linked to Tropical Storm Kilo dumped heavy rain on the islands.

The inundation overwhelmed the sewage system, causing 500,000 gallons of wastewater to spew from manholes, said Lori Kahikina, Honolulu's director of environmental services.

"Now's not the time to go swimming," she told reporters.

It could be a couple of days before the ocean is clear enough for people to enter, Kahikina estimated. She said it would likely take that long for water samples to be tested for safety.

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North Dakota Gov. Dalrymple says he won't seek re-election

By James MacPherson

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — North Dakota Republican Gov. Jack Dalrymple, who helped lead the state through the most prosperous time in its history thanks to an oil development boom, announced Monday that he won't seek re-election in 2016.

Dalrymple, 66, told reporters at the state Capitol in Bismarck that he and his wife, Betsy, made the decision last week to spend more time with family, including their five grandchildren.

"It was 100 percent a personal decision about how we want to spend our time down the road," he said.

The Republican served as the state's lieutenant governor for a decade — as North Dakota's oil industry and revenues grew— before moving into the governor's office in 2010, when then-Gov. John Hoeven resigned after winning a seat in the U.S. Senate.

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Russian ruble collapses to 7-month low on weak oil prices

By The Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian ruble plunged 2.9 percent on Monday to hit a seven-month low amid a further drop in oil prices, the country's key export.

The ruble was trading at 71.04 to the dollar at the close of trading in Moscow, its lowest level since Jan. 30, when Russian markets were hit by a combination of low energy prices and Western sanctions. After the market closed, the ruble recovered slightly in futures trading in an indication that it may recover some of its losses.

Oil is the backbone of the Russian economy and the fall of the ruble follows a sharp decline in the price of crude. The U.S. oil contract on Friday dropped below \$40 per barrel for the first time since 2009 and on Monday was down another \$1.23 a barrel at \$39.22.

The ruble's slide was accompanied by falls in the currencies of many other post-Soviet countries, with the Belarusian ruble falling more than 5 percent to a new record low against the dollar, with a drop also recorded for the Ukrainian hryvnya and various currencies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

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BHP posts 86 percent profit drop as commodity prices tumble

By The Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — BHP Billiton, the world's biggest miner, reported an 86 percent drop in annual profit on Tuesday amid plummeting commodity prices, as the company warned that China's slowing economy would lead to further market volatility.

BHP saw a net profit of \$1.9 billion for the 12 months to June 30, down from \$13.8 billion a year ago, the Melbourne, Australia-based company said in a statement. Revenue was down 22 percent to \$52 billion.

In response, the mining giant said it would cut costs, lowering its target for capital spending in the next financial year from \$9 billion to \$8.5 billion.

Miners such as BHP are under increasing pressure as a slowdown in China's economy results in lower demand for key commodities such as iron ore and coal.

In a statement, BHP noted that commodity prices were "notably lower" going into the new financial year.

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Shell's Arctic drilling permit limited: Deese

The Obama administration has only given Shell permission to work on a single well at a time in Arctic waters this summer, adviser Brian Deese reminded reporters on a conference call Monday, adding that the intent is to keep drilling activity strictly limited, The Hill reports.

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Land rights an issue in Iowa pipeline objections

The Iowa Utilities Board says some 3,700 objections have been filed against the proposal by Dakota Access LLC to build a pipeline to bring Bakken crude from North Dakota south to a distribution center in Illinois. Many objections involve the company's attempt to use eminent domain rights to gain access to land for construction, The Associated Press reports.

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Technology to boost climate deal chances: Moniz

Technology advances mean the Paris conference has a better chance of success than earlier climate meetings, Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said Monday as he expressed optimism at the National Clean Energy Summit, The Hill reports.

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Oil recovers from Monday plunge

Bargain hunting and short covering sparked a rally in the oil market Tuesday, following a slump that saw U.S. benchmark crude settle below \$40 a barrel a day earlier. Light, sweet crude for October delivery was \$1.05 higher to \$39.29 a barrel on the Nymex, while in London Brent was up 82 cents to \$43.51, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Oil price drop could deepen Mideast political troubles

The renewed slide in oil prices – which several analysts say is likely to persist – may bring with it an intensified wave of unrest in the Middle East, Quartz reports.

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Exelon nuke plants fail at PJM auction hurdle

Three of Exelon Corp.'s nuclear plants – Quad-Cities in Illinois, Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania and Oyster Creek in New Jersey – came away from PJM Interconnection's 2018-19 capacity auction without any guarantees of power purchases, the Quad-City Business Journal reports.

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Icahn allies named to Cheniere board

Carl Icahn has gained a foothold on the Cheniere Energy board of directors, with the appointment of two of his allies after he purchased shares giving him more than 8 percent of the company this month, FuelFix reports.

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National Parks give free entry on 99th birthday

Entry to facilities across the country is free Tuesday as the National Park Service celebrates its 99th birthday, KY3 reports.

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DC board rejects Exelon-Pepco merger

Voting 2-1, the D.C. Public Service Commission has moved to block Exelon's proposed purchase of Pepco Holdings, saying critics' concerns about the deal hadn't been addressed, the Washington City Paper reports.

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Oil prices drag Canadian Oil Sands credit rating: Moody's

Moody's is now giving Canadian Oil Sands Inc. a credit rating that's only one step above junk bonds, as a result of the latest slide in oil prices, The Wall Street Journal reports.

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Upcoming Events

- Aug. 25, Washington: Peace, Conflict, and the Scale of the Climate Risk Landscape (WEBINAR): The opening webinar in a series will examine the security implications of climate risk and will provide a context for the subsequent place-based and sector-based webinars. Speakers from academic institutions and think tanks. 1:15 pm , Woodrow Wilson Center, Ronald Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
- Aug. 25, Washington: At an open meeting, the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia will make its decision in Formal Case No. 1119, the proposed merger of Exelon Corp. and Pepco Holdings Inc. 11:00 am , Commission Hearing Room 1325 G Street, NW, Suite 800

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